Sens. Abourezk and Kennedy [illegible]

The Rosenbergs' Last Days

1953 Memo Suggested Use of Psychiatrist to Win Confession

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In 1953, while convicted atom spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were fighting legal battles to avoid the electric chair, a top White House aide was hatching a novel plan to pry from them a confession of guilt.

"Cracking the Rosenbergs is not a 'third-degree' problem, but a psychiatric problem," presidential assistant Charles D. ("C.D.") Jackson thought. It would be a good idea, he suggested, to have a "really skillful [illegible] psychiatrist [illegible] insinuate himself into their confidence."

If the Rosenbergs [illegible] cooperative with [illegible] psychiatrist, Jackson went on, "a stay of execution for [illegible] could be arranged while the work [illegible]."

Jackson, who was President Eisenhower's administrative assistant, sketched out his plan in a memo to Attorney General Herbert Brownell.

He assured Brownell that pity for convicted spies wasn't his motive. "I am sure you understand that my interest is not in saving the Rosenbergs," Jackson wrote. "They deserve to fry a hundred times for what they have done to this country. But — if they can be cracked, what they can tell us may save the lives of hundreds of Americans later."

The incident is one of thousands of inside-the-government scenes from the last agonizing days of the Rosenberg case which emerge from Justice Department files made public in recent weeks.

They portray a government [illegible] report was talking about [illegible] out, and, most of all, hopeful of a last-minute [illegible] from the Rosenbergs.

[illegible] convicted in April, 1951, conspiring to steal atomic [illegible] for the Soviet [illegible]

[illegible] Brownell [illegible] Edgar Hoover [illegible]

[illegible] line that [illegible] was a [illegible] the [illegible] making false [illegible] wrote.

Hoover also objected because the psychiatrist recommended by the White House aide was none other than the one used in the defense of Alger Hiss for purposes of discrediting Whittaker Chambers' testimony in another celebrated Communist trial of the period.

The psychiatrist Jackson referred to apparently was Dr. Carl A. Binger of Cambridge, Mass. He could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Nothing in the documents indicates that Binger was ever approached with Jackson's [illegible]

[illegible] Rosenbergs' rumors [illegible] that [illegible]

[illegible] tern indicates [illegible] homed [illegible] formation [illegible] the prosecution of at least three other suspected [illegible]

Late in 1953, as the Rosenbergs' first execution date approached, the Justice Department concocted a plan (which may never have been implemented) to have a representative stand by in Sing Sing prison. He was to stay there, recommended William E. Foley, chief of the Internal Security Section, "... in the event the Rosenbergs decide to confess in the hope of obtaining a commutation of sentence from the President."

The Rosenbergs' final ap- [illegible] peal to [illegible] Eisenhower [illegible] was [illegible] were [illegible] the [illegible] an [illegible] ar [illegible] last [illegible]

[illegible] June [illegible] peal [illegible] the [illegible] plant [illegible] clemency [illegible]

[illegible] of the [illegible] for a [illegible] tions. [illegible] one [illegible] le, is [illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible] tions at [illegible] sing, [illegible] vernment [illegible] to re- [illegible] whether bit of [illegible] surance from an unidentified source — Tessie Greenglass, the mother of David Greenglass and Ethel Rosenberg.

The FBI went to interview Mrs. Greenglass on Aug. 27, according to a memo in the files just released. The memo reports that on that date she told FBI agent John Harrington "that she did not attend the funeral of her daughter and son-in-law, and that she believed that her daughter, Ethel Rosenberg, was guilty and a member of Stalin."